

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of bonding an image to a surface comprising the steps of
  - 5      • printing the image onto an image-receiving substrate;
  - applying a first side of an adhesive layer onto the image;
  - securing a backing layer to a second side of the adhesive layer to prevent bonding of the second side to an unintended object;
  - detaching the backing layer from the second side after the first side has
    - 10     been applied to the image;
    - contacting the second side to the surface; and
    - removing the image-receiving substrate to leave the image bonded to the surface.
- 15       2. The method of claim 1 wherein the securing step is performed before the applying step.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the first side of the adhesive layer is printed onto the image.
- 20       4. The method of claim 1 wherein the image is reverse-printed onto the image-receiving substrate.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the image-receiving substrate is a substantially transparent polymeric film.
- 25       6. The method of claim 1 wherein the image-receiving substrate is coated with a release-finish, the image being printed onto the release-finish.
- 30       7. The method of claim 6 wherein the release-finish is a breakaway-coating that remains fastened to the image when the image-receiving substrate is removed.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the release-finish is a release-coating that remains fastened to the image-receiving substrate when the image-receiving substrate is removed.

5 9. The method of claim 7 wherein the total thickness of the breakaway-coating, image and adhesive bonded to the surface is less than about 5 mils.

10 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the total thickness of the breakaway-coating, image and adhesive bonded to the surface is less than about 3 mils.

10 11. The method of claim 8 wherein the total thickness of the image and adhesive bonded to the surface is less than about 5 mils.

15 12. The method of claim 8 wherein the total thickness of the image and adhesive bonded to the surface is less than about 3 mils.

15 13. The method of claim 1 further comprising the additional step of coating the image bonded to the surface with a clear-coat.

20 14. The method of claim 11 wherein the clear-coat is a liquid.

20 15. The method of claim 11 wherein the thickness of the adhered image and the clear-coat combine to substantially eliminate any tactile discernment of any edge on the surface.

25 16. The method of claim 1 wherein the second side of the adhesive layer has low tackiness.

30 17. The method of claim 1 further comprising, between the contacting and removing steps, the step of applying pressure to the image-receiving substrate to facilitate adhesion to the surface.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the surface is a vehicle surface.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the surface is an automobile surface.

5 20. The method of claim 18, wherein the surface is a airplane surface.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the surface is a building structure surface.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the surface is a wall surface.

10 23. The method of claim 21, wherein the surface is a ceiling surface.

24. The method of claim 6, wherein the image, image-receiving substrate, release-finish and adhesive layer are mutually insoluble.

15 25. A transferred graphic indelibly bonded to a surface, comprising a composite of an image having outer and inner sides and an adhesive secured between the inner side and the surface, and a clear-coat overlying the composite and the surface.

20 26. The transferred graphic of claim 25 wherein the composite has a breakaway-coating affixed to the outer side of the image.

27. The transferred graphic of claim 25 wherein the total thickness of the composite and clear-coat is less than about 5 mils.

25 28. The transferred graphic of claim 27 wherein the total thickness of the composite and clear-coat is less than about 3 mils.

30 29. The transferred graphic of claim 26 wherein the total thickness of the composite and clear-coat is less than about 5 mils.

30. The transferred graphic of claim 29 wherein the total thickness of the composite and clear-coat is less than about 3 mils.

31. The transferred graphic of claim 25, wherein the ink image is comprised of 5 multiple inks applied in succession to create a multi-colored image.

32. A graphic transfer sheet comprising:

- an image-receiving substrate having first and second sides and a release-finish on the first side;
- 10 • an image applied to the release-finish;
- an adhesive layer affixed to the image, the adhesive layer and image having a combined thickness less than about 5 mils; and
- a backing layer secured to the adhesive layer,

whereby the graphic transfer sheet is used to transfer and secure the image and

15 adhesive layer, substrate-free, to a surface.

33. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the image-receiving substrate is a transparent polymeric film.

20 34. The transfer sheet of claim 33 wherein the polymeric film is polyester.

35. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the adhesive is a pressure-sensitive acrylic adhesive.

25 36. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the backing layer is smooth polyester.

37. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the release-finish is a release-coating that adheres more strongly to the image-receiving substrate when the image 30 and adhesive layer are transferred to the surface.

38. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the release-finish is a breakaway-coating that adheres more strongly to the image than to the image-receiving substrate, so that the breakaway-coating remains on the image when the image is secured to the surface and the image-receiving substrate is removed.

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39. The transfer sheet of claim 38 wherein the combined thickness of the adhesive layer, image and breakaway-coating is less than about 5 mils.

40. The transfer sheet of claim 32 wherein the combined thickness of the adhesive layer and image is less than about 3 mils.

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41. The transfer sheet of claim 39 wherein the combined thickness of the adhesive layer, image and breakaway-coating is less than about 3 mils.

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